
ON THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

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Abstract

This article examines the origin of English proverbs and sayings. Proverbs and sayings provide an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with the life and culture of the people for whom a given language is native; they convince us that different peoples can have the same views and moral values. The study of proverbs and sayings contributes to understanding the mentality and national character of the speakers of this language. Proverbs and sayings, as a whole, cover most of human experience.

There are hundreds of proverbs and sayings in the English language. They were created by many generations of people, developed and improved over the centuries. Both Russian and English linguists have studied the origin of proverbs and sayings. The opinion of linguists on a number of problems related to proverbs and sayings, since these are extremely complex phenomena, the study of which requires its own research method. Therefore, the purpose of this article will be to identify the features of English proverbs and sayings.

Keywords: proverbs and sayings, origin and problems, an element of folk art, change, winged expressions.

Introduction

Proverbs and sayings are an ancient genre of folk art. They arose in ancient times and go back centuries. Many of them appeared even when there was no writing. In phraseology, there is a special section - paremiology, which studies the structural-semantic type of stable combinations of words called proverbs and sayings. Many linguists have studied the origin of proverbs and sayings; they have put forward various hypotheses about their appearance and functioning in the language.

V.A. Zhukov argues that it is very difficult to determine from what time proverbs began to circulate among the people - oral short sayings on a variety of topics. The time of the emergence of the first sayings - apt sayings that are capable of expressively and accurately characterizing something in a conversation without the help of tedious and complex explanations is also unknown, but, according to the researcher, one thing is indisputable: proverbs and sayings arose in distant antiquity and have been accompanying the people since then throughout its history. Special properties have made both proverbs and sayings so persistent and necessary in everyday life and speech [1].

L.N. Orkina notes that a proverb is not a simple saying. It expresses the opinion of the people. It contains the people's assessment of life, the observations of the people's mind. Not every saying became a proverb, but only one that was consistent with the way of life,

the thoughts of many people - such a saying could exist for millennia, passing from century to century. Behind every proverb is the authority of the generations that created them. Therefore, proverbs do not argue, do not prove - they simply affirm or deny something in the confidence that everything they say is the solid truth [2].

According to S.G. Berezhan, one of the sources of the appearance of proverbs and sayings is oral folk art - songs, fairy tales, epics, riddles [3]. As we see, the question of the primary sources of proverbs and sayings remains open.

Results and Discussion

Of course, any proverb was created by a specific person in certain circumstances, but it is not always possible to establish the true origin of all proverbs and sayings, especially ancient ones. Therefore, it is more correct to say that some proverbs and sayings are of folk origin, that their primary source is in the collective mind of the people. In many utterances summarizing everyday experience, the meaning of words seems to have developed into proverbial form gradually, without any explicit announcement. After many hundreds of people expressed the same thought in different ways, after much trial and error, the thought finally acquired its memorized form and began its life as a proverb.

The so-called native English proverbs have a folk origin, the peculiarity of their origin is that they arose thanks to the traditions, customs and beliefs of the English people, and also in the fact that they were created on the basis of various realities and facts of English history.

Thus, the appearance of the proverb "Play fast and loose" (meaning in Russian "вести нечестную, двойную игру") is associated with an ancient game that was played mainly at fairs in England. The conditions of the game were that a belt or rope was either tightly wound or loosened around the finger, and the spectators could not catch the deft manipulation of the hands and invariably lost the bet.

English proverbs are very diverse in their content and cover all aspects of the life of the English people:

- ✓ **In proverbs, an unflattering assessment is given to the rich:** one law for the rich, and another for the poor; a thief passes for a gentleman when stealing has made him rich and others.
- ✓ **War is condemned:** war is sweet to them that know it not; war is the sport of kings.
- ✓ **Fools are ridiculed:** a fool's bolt is soon shot; fools rush in where angels fear to tread; he who is born a fool is never cured and others.
- ✓ **Lazy people and quitters are criticized:** idleness is the root of all evil; the devil finds work for idle hands to do.
- ✓ **Proverbs teach frugality and hard work:** a penny saved is a penny gained; take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves; he that will eat the kernel must crack the nut (or he who would eat the nut must first crack the shell); he that would eat the fruit must climb the tree.

✓ **Many proverbs contain a positive assessment:** a great ship asks deep waters; brevity is the soul of wit («Hamlet»); good health is above wealth; little strokes fell great oaks.

The meaning of proverbs can be either completely or partially rethought:

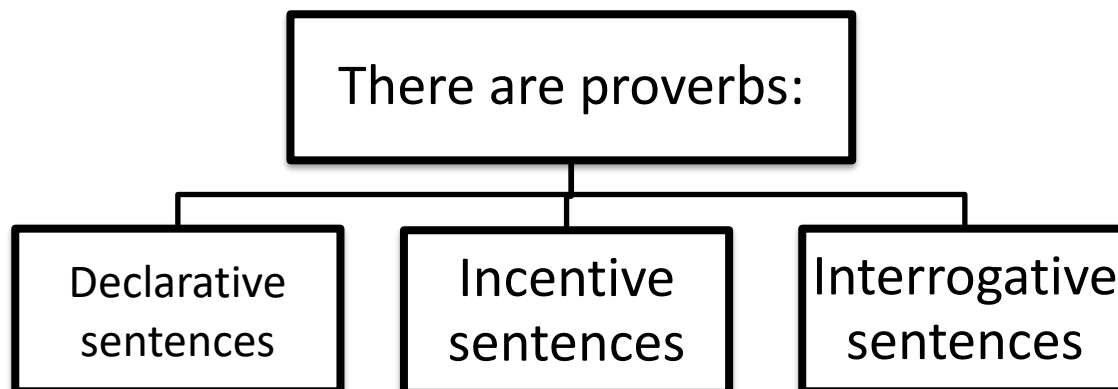
➤ **Proverbs with a metaphorical meaning of one component:** brevity is the soul of wit - («Hamlet»); calamity is a man's true touchstone; familiarity breeds contempt; like begets like; like cures like.

In the proverbs like begets like and like cures like, the word like comes at the beginning and end, forming a frame. Such repetition, rarely found in proverbs, is called circular.

➤ **Proverbs with two metaphorical components:** faults are thick where love is thin; speech is silver, but silence is golden. Along with two metaphorical components distant from each other, it is also possible that a metaphorical phrase may be present in a proverb: life is not a bed of roses; zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse.

In modern English there are a significant number of proverbs with a comparative meaning: blood is thicker than water; a miss is as good as a mile; words cut (or hurt) more than swords and others.

A characteristic feature of proverbs is their unambiguity. This is apparently explained by the high degree of generalization of their meaning and their immobility in the text.



Declarative sentences. Simple affirmative sentences. Declarative sentences assert or deny something. The number of proverbs - simple affirmative sentences - is very significant. In the vast majority of cases, the subject in them is a noun, in contrast to proverbs - complex sentences in which, for example, a personal pronoun often appears as a subject.

The subject of proverbs - simple affirmative sentences - occurs without definition, for example: appetite comes with eating; Homer sometimes- nodes; pride goes before a fall and others.

In a much larger number of proverbs, the subject is found with different definitions: hungry bellies have no ears; and the fool's bolt is soon shot; birds of a feather flock together; too many cooks spoil the broth.

The definition can have not only a subject, but also a second noun: little pitchers have long ears; a penny saved is a penny gained.

In some proverbs, the second noun has a prepositive definition, while the subject does not: hunger is the best sauce.

The proverb as well be hung (or hung) for a sheep as a lamb is an incomplete simple sentence. Absent subjects (he, you, etc.) and predicates (may or might) are usually used in speech. The examples below show the life of this proverb in the language.

Others ... comforted themselves with the homely proverb, that being hung at all, they might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb (Ch. Dickens).

Bluebeard. My lord: I stand rebuked. I am sorry: I can say no more. But if you prophesy that I shall be hanged, I shall never be able to resist temptation because I shall always be telling myself that I may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb (G.B. Shaw).

If you're wise, George, you'll go to your office and write me your check for three hundred thousand dollars... You can't be hung any more for a sheep than you can for a lamb (Th. Dreiser).

In the last example, as a result of changing the proverb, it turns into a complex sentence.

Simple negative sentences. Of the variety of ways to express negation in English, not all are used in proverbs. In proverbs, for example, questions in a negative form are not found. Proverbs also do not use the particle not with the predicative form of the verb, with which it merges into a single negative form: doesn't, didn't, isn't, aren't, wasn't, shan't, won't. There are only negative forms don't and rarely can't (you can't eat your cake and have it or you can't have your cake and eat it).

The subject of proverbs - simple negative sentences - can be expressed:

- pronoun: you cannot fly the same ox twice;
- a noun without a defining word and with a defining word: plenty is no; great barkers are no biters; a watched pot never boils; No man can serve two masters (bib.).

Complex sentences. Proverbs with a complex sentence structure are the most common in the English language. Complex sentences are characterized by the causal conditioning of the main clause by the subordinate clause.

1. Among the proverbs with a complex sentence structure, there is a group of sentences with a restrictive attributive clause introduced by the relative pronoun that with the pronoun he as the subject of the main clause.

There are two structural types of such sentences:

- 1) the subordinate clause follows the main clause: he is lifeless, that is faultless;
- 2) the subordinate clause, introduced by the pronoun that, stands between the subject he and the rest of the main clause: he that dies, pays all debts.

We find similar structural types in the case when the subordinate clause is introduced by the relative pronoun who, and the second type is much more common than the first:

- 1) he laughs best who laughs last;
- 2) he who pays the piper, calls the tune; he who pleased everybody died before he was born.

In many proverbs, the subordinate attributive, introduced by the pronoun who, comes before the main clause. Subordinate attributive clauses introduced by the pronoun that

cannot precede the main clause: who breaks, pays; who keeps company with the wolf, will learn to howl.

2. You can also distinguish a group of complex sentences with a conditional subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *if* and preceding the main clause: *if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch; if you run after two hares, you will catch neither.*

In rare cases, the conditional clause comes after the main clause: *it is easy to swim if another holds up your chin*

3. A widespread structural type of proverbs are emphatic complex sentences with a restrictive attributive clause introduced by the pronoun *that*, and a preceding pronoun it as a formal subject, having a demonstrative meaning, for example: *it is a good horse that never stumbles; it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back.*

The pronoun *that* is a substitute for those nouns of the subordinating clause to which it refers, and is therefore equated with nouns, i.e. is the subject of the subordinate clause.

4. Among the proverbs there are also complex sentences with subordinate clauses of time, introduced by the conjunction *when*, for example: *when guns speak it is too late to argue; when the cats away, the mice will play.*

Within the simultaneity relationship, it is also possible to use the conjunction *while*, for example: *while the grass grows the horse (or steed) starves.*

5. Subordinate clauses can be introduced with the pronoun *what*, for example: *what is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh.*

In addition to these main groups, there are individual proverbs and other structural types. Among the proverbs, which are complex sentences, there are a small number of complex sentences with different connections between the parts.

A. Oppositional-concessive connection: *it never rains, but it pours.*

B. Opposite-restrictive connection: *the pitcher goes often to the well, but is broken at last.*

C. Connective connection: *as you sow, you shall mow.*

D. Connective-relative connection: *there is one good wife in the country, and every man thinks he has her.*

Among the proverbs with a compound sentence structure, there are non-conjunctive compound sentences that indicate the cause-and-effect relationship of the components. A special group among them consists of elliptical revolutions of various types, characterized by maximum conciseness: *in for a penny, in for a pound; no cross, no crown; out of sight, out of mind; nothing venture, nothing gain (or have); once bitten, twice shy.*

Although it is impossible to add the missing members of the sentence to these phrases, as can be done in incomplete variable sentences, they are still predicative phraseological units, semantically equivalent to the sentence. In such phrases, there is not an omission of any member of the sentence, but its natural absence. In some cases, it can be established that these phrases go back to complex sentences, for example: *The way to*

Blisse lyes not on beds of Downer. And he that had no Crosse, deserves no Crowne [4]. This example is taken from the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs.

In the case of a common grammatical model, for example, the type no cross, no crown, it is in principle possible to form a new proverb by analogy, bypassing the stage of a complex sentence.

Incentive sentences. Many proverbs are incentive sentences, i.e. express an impulse to action.

- Simple sentences. Without denial: cut your coat according to your cloth; let sleeping dogs lie. With denial: don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs; don't (or never) look a gift horse in the mouth.

- Complex sentences. Without denial: do in Rome as the Romans do; make hay while the sun shines. With denial: don't count your chickens before they are hatched; don't halloo till you are out of the wood.

Interrogative sentences are extremely rare among English proverbs. These include the following proverbs: can the leopard change his spots?; when Adam delved and Eve span who was then a (or the) gentleman?

These sentences, interrogative in form, are declarative sentences in meaning, i.e. rhetorical questions. This, in particular, is confirmed by the fact that the proverb has a possible variant in interrogative form - a declarative sentence, for example: can the leopard change his spots? (or the leopard cannot change his spots) (bib.)

Conclusions

By conducting a thorough study of the definition and structure of proverbs and sayings in the English language, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- ✓ It is necessary to draw a clear line between proverbs and sayings.
- ✓ A proverb is always a sentence. It pursues a didactic goal (to teach, warn, etc.). Unlike other types of phraseological units, proverbs are often complex sentences. In context, a proverb can act as an independent sentence or part of a complex sentence.
- ✓ Proverbs can be declarative, motivating and interrogative sentences. There are no exclamatory sentences among proverbs.
- ✓ A proverb is a communicative phraseological unit of a non-proverbial nature. Most sayings are colloquial in nature. In the English language there are many times fewer sayings than proverbs.
- ✓ Most sayings are evaluative phrases. They can express both positive and negative assessments.

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